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STUDENT REPORT

THE MILITARY STRATEGIES OF
SPRUANCE AND HALSEY

MAJOR JAMES H. MONTMAN 84-1805

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

**AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
AIR UNIVERSITY
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| 20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Presents a review, analysis and comparison of the World War Two military strategies of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance at the Battle of Midway, and Admiral William F. Halsey at the Battle Of Leyte Gulf. This is done within the context of the Air Command and Staff College Strategy Process Model. | | |

PREFACE

The purpose of this project was to review, analyze and compare the strategies of two naval leaders, Spruance and Halsey, within the context of the ACSC Strategy Process Model. This project would then become the basis for an ACSC seminar during the Military History - Great Warriors / Great Thinkers phase of instruction. As such, the format of the paper requires that Chapter Two and Chapter Three be able to "stand alone" so that they may be extracted for future use as a complete package on each individual. My sponsor asked that I analyze each individual's strategy with respect to a major battle in which each was a major player, and suggested Midway for Spruance and Leyte Gulf for Halsey. To lay the groundwork for strategy analysis, it was necessary to describe each battle in some detail. Both Chapters Two and Three lean heavily on one major research source and tend to look as if they are nothing more than book condensations. However, both battles are also described in many of the books in the Bibliography and elsewhere. Therefore, I chose to remain with one primary source to provide a coherent chronological view of each battle and did so after considering other sources not mentioned in the Bibliography, such as Belote and Belote's Titans of the Seas, Morison's Two Ocean War, and Hoyt's The Battle of Leyte Gulf, among others. The sources I chose as primary were the ones I considered most accurate and useful to the purpose of this project.

My intent was to provide my sponsor with a concise accurate description of each battle, sourced heavily from a recognized authority, then to provide my analysis of each individual's strategy within the context of the ACSC Strategy Process Model. Comments on the Principles of War, while not asked for by my sponsor, were suggested by my advisor as a means of enhancing and relating this project to other curriculum being taught during the same phase at ACSC. I hope the reader finds this project as useful as I did interesting and informative.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major James H. Montman graduated with Honors from New Mexico State University and received his Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and named a Distinguished Graduate of the school's AFROTC program, of which he was Cadet Commander. He received his pilot's wings as a Distinguished Graduate of the Undergraduate Pilot Training program at Webb AFB TX. He was assigned to the F-106 fighter interceptor and completed his first operational tour at Grand Forks AFB ND. Major Montman was then assigned as an instructor pilot and advisor to the California Air National Guard at Fresno, as they converted from the F-102 to the F-106. His next assignment was to the 84th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Castle AFB CA flying the F-106. After attending the Interceptor Weapons School at Tyndall AFB FL, he became Weapons Training Officer of the 84th. Major Montman co-authored an article entitled "Air Refueling the Grey Ghost" for Interceptor Magazine during this period. He was subsequently assigned to George AFB as Commander, Det One, 84th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. In 1980 Major Montman was assigned to the Headquarters, Tactical Air Command, DCS Personnel, Rated Officer Assignments branch. He was subsequently named Chief of Rated Officer Assignments for TAC. He has completed the Squadron Officers School, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and Air Command and Staff College nonresident programs. Major Montman was recently selected for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. He is currently enrolled in the resident Air Command and Staff College program and is also completing the requirements for his Master's Degree in Political Science from Auburn University at Montgomery. His next assignment will be to Suwon AFB Korea flying the A-10 close air support aircraft.



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The military strategy utilized by two great World War Two U.S. Navy leaders will provide an insight into the evolution of the strategy process. This paper will examine two Pacific Theater leaders involved in the early employment of a relatively new naval weapon system, the aircraft carrier. Carrier air power was virtually untested at the beginning of the second world war and eventually developed into a most formidable battle tool. The Battle of Coral Sea provided a basis for carrier tactics employed in later engagements such as the Battle of Midway. The military strategy of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance will be examined with respect to the Battle of Midway. Midway was the first major decisive naval battle where the outcome was decided on the basis of aircraft carrier operations alone. The battle was fought against a numerically superior force during the period that the Japanese Navy was strongly on the offensive.

Next, the military strategy of Admiral William F. Halsey as utilized during the Battle for Leyte Gulf will be reviewed with a continuing focus on carrier air power. Leyte Gulf was a complex group of four battles involving carrier air as well as land based air power, surface engagements and invasion forces. The battle was fought against a Japanese force with relatively few remaining

carrier air resources. Also, it was fought from an American offensive position, as U.S. forces pressed toward Japan through the Philippines.

Finally, an analysis of the strategy used by these two great warriors will be made within the context of the ACSC strategy process model in an effort to increase the understanding of the process of strategy and its derivation. A brief look at selected principles of war is also included in an effort to correlate abstract thought on strategy and the conduct of war with actual warfighting experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

RAYMOND AMES SPRUANCE AND THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY

Biographical Sketch

Raymond Ames Spruance was born in Baltimore, Maryland on 3 July 1886. His mother, the former Annie Ames Hiss, was a highly intelligent descendant of nine generations of solid New England Americans with such diverse backgrounds as scholars, clergy, patriots, pioneers and pilgrims. (1:3-4) His father, Alexander Spruance, was descendant from five generations of farmers and merchants who lived in Delaware. (1:3) Spruance had a difficult childhood, being raised partly by his parents and partly by other relatives. He developed a reputation as a quiet, independent individual having a high degree of intelligence. (1:3-6)

He entered the U.S. Naval Academy as a midshipsman through a Congressional appointment on 2 July 1903. Spruance learned much of the technical aspects of sailing while at the Academy. He made excellent grades and developed the skills required of a junior naval officer, graduating 25th in a class of 209. (1:16) Spruance developed the foundations of a lifelong respect for the Japanese as a young Ensign assigned to the USS Minnesota. This ship was part of President Roosevelt's Great White Fleet which visited Japan in 1908, a visit which had great influence on Spruance. (1:20) He also gained valuable experience in sea duty

as a gunnery officer and received technical education as an electrical engineer early in his career. He performed well and gained the respect of many senior officers. He became known as a man of high integrity, honesty and morality. He had a strong will, was industrious and curious about most anything. (1:33)

Preliminaries-The Battlefield of the Pacific

World War Two was well underway when the United States assumed complete responsibility for the Pacific area on 17 March 1942. This was accomplished by Presidential agreement with Britain's Winston Churchill. (6:3) The strategic plan at that point of the war was to conduct a defensive campaign in the Pacific while attempting to defeat Hitler in Europe, the latter having first priority. (6:4) The Pacific still had great value because of communications links and the continual threat of invasion of the mainland, should Pacific defenses fall. (6:4)

Japan had enjoyed numerous successes in the Pacific and had suffered few losses. The Japanese wanted to continue their conquests and to attempt to extend their defensive perimeter further into the Pacific. (6:5) Midway, a small atoll about half way between the U.S. and Japan, was one of three major locations the Japanese wanted for establishment of this perimeter. (6:6) It was strategically located and the Japanese felt that the United States could be drawn into a battle in which Japan could destroy what remained of the Pacific fleet after Pearl Harbor. (6:6)

Previous Japanese strategy had been to keep their fleet in friendly waters and let the enemy come to them. (6:6) Admiral Yamamoto, Japanese Fleet commander, did not accept this strategy. (6:6) He felt that it was vitally important to find the American fleet and engage it before the United States industrial base could build a war fighting capability that would ultimately be able to defeat the Japanese. (4:3) Midway also provided a location from which the Japanese could launch air patrols and establish control of the Pacific. (6:6)

CORAL SEA

Midway was a very important campaign for the Japanese, however the first battle fought for establishment of a Japanese defensive perimeter was in the southwest Pacific area known as the Coral Sea. This battle was also the first great combat action between opposing aircraft carrier forces and is important for lessons learned and later used at Midway. (6:7) The enemy tactical strategy was often very complex, involving divided forces and requiring precise timing and employment. (6:13) This factor was significant in many World War Two actions. The Japanese plan was to engage the U.S. task force in a pincer type maneuver as they entered the Coral Sea. Their carrier forces would then attack and destroy U.S. planes and ships. (6:12)

U.S. commanders in the Pacific were Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur. They shared responsibilities in the area along

a boundary line such that Admiral Nimitz controlled most of the eastern area while General MacArthur had responsibility in the west. Adm Nimitz generally controlled naval engagements in the Pacific, but he could not take any of Ge MacArthur's troops or planes for use elsewhere. (6:13)

Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher and his Task Force 17 including the carriers Yorktown and Lexington were part of Nimitz' Pacific fleet and were the primary Coral Sea battle participants. (6:15) Fletcher's mission was to "destroy enemy ships, shipping and aircraft at favorable opportunities in order to assist in checking further advances by (the) enemy in the New Guinea - Solomons area". (6:21) Admiral William F. Halsey commanded Task Force 16 including the carriers Enterprise and Hornet, however they could not arrive in time to be used at Coral Sea. Rear Admiral Spruance commanded Halsey's heavy cruiser forces during this portion of the war. The Japanese forces at Coral Sea included two fleet carriers and one light carrier plus general purpose forces. (6:26)

U.S. Fleet strategy of the time called for surprise hit and run type carrier raids, avoiding losses wherever possible. (6:21) Carrier air squadrons attacked independently which was the accepted tactic of the period. (6:21)

The Battle of Coral Sea occurred in early May, 1942. Its outcome has been called a tactical victory for the Japanese, but a strategic victory for U.S. forces. (6:67) The U.S. lost three important ships including the carrier Lexington, plus extensive

damage to the carrier Yorktown. The Japanese on the other hand, were kept out of New Guinea, their first strategic objective in establishing a defensive perimeter. In addition, they suffered damage to one fleet carrier and lost a large number of aircraft. (6:63)

American problems encountered in the battle revolved around the inadequacy of reconnaissance missions and proper recognition of enemy ships. (6:40) The only way to locate enemy ships was by visual sighting, necessitating aerial search missions. Once the enemy was located, a time consuming process, he had to be adequately identified for threat assessment purposes. These factors were critical to decision makers and impacted later World War Two carrier battles as well. Coral Sea was the beginning of a new era of naval strategy.

"The Battle of the Coral Sea will be ever memorable as the first purely carrier against carrier naval battle in which all losses were inflicted by air action and no ship on either side sighted a surface enemy." (6:64)

The Battle of Midway

The small Midway atoll was strategically important due to its location, its use as a cable communications linking station, and as an American seaplane and submarine refueling base. (6:75) It was the westernmost American base in the Pacific, seen by the Japanese as a sentry for Hawaii. (6:70) Japanese strategy at

this point was to be accomplished, in line with their defensive perimeter plan, by occupying the Western Aleutians, occupying Midway, and then to engage and destroy the American fleet as they came to defend Midway. (6:75-76)

The tactical plan was to strike the Aleutians with one group, deploy a second group between Midway and the Aleutians to block any American advances, and have a third group attack and invade Midway, hopefully followed by the destruction of the arriving U.S. carrier forces. (6:77) The Japanese had five distinct forces identified to accomplish this objective and the overall plan called for splitting of these forces into smaller support elements to be employed against various objectives. (6:76-77) The splitting of forces and use of resources in the Aleutians weakened the strength of the Japanese fleet at Midway, exposing it to possible defeat by weaker forces. (6:78) The Aleutian effort was designed to draw attention away from the real objective, occupation of Midway. The idea was to eventually lure U.S. forces into an unfavorable tactical situation, cut off retreat, attack the flanks, and then destroy the carrier force. (6:78) The key to the success of the Japanese plan was the successful surprise invasion of Midway prior to the arrival of American forces.

American intelligence officers had become aware of the Japanese plan bit by bit and they were able to provide an estimate to Admiral Nimitz which allowed him to respond to the Midway threat. (6:80) The timely intelligence work was a major key to

the success of the Midway campaign. Adm Nimitz responded by developing a plan which emphasized the surprise presence of U.S. carriers at Midway, hoping to catch the Japanese unaware. In order to accomplish this, Nimitz quickly recovered Task Force 17 from the Coral Sea area and started preparations for Midway. (6:80) Task Force 16 was diverted to Pearl Harbor where the Midway force was being built up. (6:80) To show the intensity of Nimitz' efforts, the carrier Yorktown, heavily damaged at Coral Sea and estimated to require ninety days for repair, was made seaworthy in only two days. (6:81)

Admiral Halsey was relieved of command of Task Force 16 due to illness and Rear Admiral Spruance, Halsey's heavy cruiser commander, was given command. (6:81-82) Spruance has been credited as having had the best tactical mind of any naval commander in the Pacific theater. (3:237) He had no aircraft carrier experience, but that did not cause any hesitation on Nimitz' decision to make him task force commander. (3:237) Admiral Fletcher, senior to Spruance, was given overall tactical command and was tasked by Nimitz to "inflict maximum damage on (the) enemy by employing strong attrition tactics" to be "governed by the principle of calculated risk". (6:84) This meant to use air strikes on enemy ships without exposing your forces to attack, without a good chance of inflicting great damage on the enemy. (6:84) Nimitz also ordered them to position northeast of Midway, out of range of enemy search planes, hoping that Midway based aircraft would locate the Japanese carriers approaching from the

southwest before the American forces were discovered, thus preserving the element of surprise. (6:84)

Tactically, battleships were not planned for use in this battle because of their relatively slower speed and limited available protective air cover. (6:82) U.S. forces had some tactical advantages over the Japanese including a shorter distance to travel to the battle area, better radar capabilities and the availability of land based air power at Midway. (6:83) The overall Japanese force was much superior, however it included many surface combatants meant to support the invasion, not a carrier launched aircraft attack.

Admiral Spruance, now in command of Task Force 16 with the carriers Enterprise and Hornet, departed Pearl Harbor and led the force toward Midway. Fletcher and Task Force 17 departed following completion of repairs to Yorktown. (6:97) Japanese forces arrived in the Midway area and on 3 June were sighted by Midway based reconnaissance planes. (6:98) Spruance summed up the battle plan when he signaled his forces that "if (the) presence of Task Forces 16 and 17 remain unknown to (the) enemy we should be able to make surprise flank attacks on enemy carriers from position NE of Midway. Further operations will be based on results of these attacks, damage inflicted by Midway forces, and information of enemy movement". (6:98) After rendezvous with Spruance, Fletcher ordered a course change to provide for an intercept of the enemy at dawn on 4 June, 1942, the date of the anticipated Japanese attack on Midway. (6:102)

Part of the Japanese force was relocated early on the 4th by land based aircraft. (6:102) The enemy had already launched their first strike on Midway and were unaware of U.S. fleet presence, but were searching for them as a precaution. The Japanese carrier force consisted of four fleet aircraft carriers: The Kaga, Soryu, Akagi, and Hiryu. (6:103) Spruance wanted to attack early with as much power as possible, concentrating on the enemy carriers, hoping to hit them before they found and hit him. (1:124) He felt that if he could surprise them, he could destroy them in one strike. He knew that if they found him first their superior force would prevail. (1:125)

The initial reported sighting of enemy carriers was in error by some 40 miles, however it provided U.S. forces enough information on which to make a decision to launch. (6:103) While Yorktown recovered her previously launched search planes, Spruance was given permission to proceed on his own into the attack. (6:103) With the advice of his staff, he launched 116 aircraft in a maximum effort, at maximum range, as early as he could, in the hope of catching the Japanese unaware and in the process of recovering from their first strike. (6:114) This critical decision was made even though the whereabouts of all of the Japanese carriers could not be confirmed. The greater range involved with an earlier than originally planned attack created greater risk of aircraft losses due to fuel starvation. (6:117) Additionally, for the first time in many years, wind again became a factor in naval warfare because of its effect on aircraft

launches and recoveries. (3:241) The American carriers had to turn away from the battle area to provide sufficient headwind for these operations. This was especially critical considering the long ranges already involved. Even so, Spruance knew the importance of the element of surprise and committed his forces as early as was deemed possible. He threw in everything he had, except for protective air cover, based on the principle of calculated risk. (3:243)

The Japanese search planes found the U.S. forces, but too late to stop enemy confusion on whether to arm for a second strike on Midway, or to prepare for engagement with surface or carrier forces. (6:109) In the meantime, Admiral Fletcher had delayed his initial strike by an hour in order to recover search planes while hoping for positive sighting of all four enemy carriers. He subsequently launched 35 aircraft, holding some back for a second launch, in the event the fourth carrier could be located. (6:114)

The Japanese carriers, in a box formation and covered by support vessels, were (after some delay) located and attacked by squadron attacks of torpedo aircraft and then by dive bombers. (6:116) The sequential timing of the actual attacks was quite lucky due to problems finding the enemy, different launch times and other difficulties. The first attacks by unescorted low and slow torpedo planes met extensive fighter resistance and antiaircraft fire and were hopelessly over matched. (6:117) The first torpedo squadron, Torpedo Eight, lost all 15 aircraft and only one of thirty men survived. (6:117) The second torpedo

squadron arrived on the scene, also without fighter cover, losing 10 of 14 aircraft. (6:120) After two squadron attacks, 25 of 29 aircraft had been lost and no hits on a Japanese ship had been recorded. (6:120) Tragic as this may seem, this action did have a positive side. It dragged the enemy fighter cover down to such a low level that subsequent attacks by dive bombers were virtually unopposed. (6:121) The early attacks also caused much maneuvering on the part of the enemy fleet and kept them from launching any of their aircraft trapped on board. (6:121)

Dive bombers from both carrier groups then arrived on the scene virtually together, through coincidence and a measure of luck, and were able to continue the attack on the enemy carrier force, eventually causing the loss of three of the four Japanese carriers. (6:122-129) Several U.S. aircraft were lost due to operational problems such as running out of fuel and recovery carriers not being where the returning planes had expected to find them. (6:130) This completed the first phase of the battle, however the carrier Hiryu with a full air group had not yet been located. (6:132) The enemy launched a counter attack which eventually resulted in the loss of Yorktown. At this point Adm Fletcher, in effect, gave Spruance full responsibility for conduct of the rest of the battle. (6:141)

Spruance had already launched an attack on Hiryu, the second maximum effort of the day, based on previous sightings by Yorktown search planes. Tactics employed were similar to the morning mission. Hiryu received four direct dive bomb hits,

causing its eventual loss and sinking. (6:136) Spruance again had made a critically timed decision based on a small amount of accurate information, resulting in great success.

The Japanese did not realize the American forces had three carriers until that afternoon. (6:139) They had suffered the loss of all four of their carriers, an estimated 250 aircraft and over 2100 men including many of their highly trained valuable aviators. (6:139-140) Faced with no protective air cover and the two remaining American carriers, they retreated from the engagement. Spruance decided not to give chase immediately, another critically important decision. He thereby avoided a possibly fatal night surface engagement, which the Japanese would like to have fought due to their supporting heavy gun forces. (6:142) He did give chase the following morning, causing the destruction of one enemy cruiser and heavy damage to another through air attacks. (3:248) Spruance was now being lured toward the Japanese held Wake Island by the enemy withdrawal, but he made another important decision and elected to stop the chase because of crew exhaustion and fuel considerations. He thus avoided a disadvantageous confrontation with the enemy which would have been supported by land based aircraft. (6:151) This constituted the final act of the Battle of Midway.

The Battle of Midway further emphasized the growing vital role of carrier air power. (6:157) It had caused the Japanese abandonment of the invasion of Midway and U.S. forces had destroyed the enemy air component while retaining the majority of

their forces. The brilliant tactical decisions of Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance coupled with vital intelligence information before and during the conflict were instrumental in this victory. (6:158)

"The Battle of Midway was ... an overwhelming American strategic and tactical victory ... by destroying four of Japan's finest aircraft carriers together with many of her best pilots it deprived the Japanese Navy of a large and vital portion of her powerful carrier striking force, it had a stimulating effect on the morale of the American fighting forces; ... it stopped the Japanese expansion to the east; it put an end to Japanese offensive action which had been all conquering for the first six months of the war; it restored the balance of naval power in the Pacific which thereafter steadily shifted to favor the American side; and it removed the threat to Hawaii and the west coast of the U.S." (1:150)

STRATEGY PROCESS MODEL ANALYSIS

At the time of the Battle of Midway, U.S. national objectives were twofold and consisted of defeating Germany in Europe, and Japan in the Pacific. Initial priorities had been established such that the European war carried the most emphasis. The importance of maintaining open sea and communication links in the Pacific against the Japanese advance soon accounted for a tremendous pull on American men and material over the European effort. (7:270-271) Defeat of the enemy remained the overall objective on both fronts. World War Two grand strategy included the use of the economic and military instruments of power, and

Japan's fears of American industrial might were soon justified in terms of military capabilities. The U.S., considering its Pacific border and the public emotional response to Pearl Harbor, was more inclined to fight the Pacific war in lieu of European priorities. (7:270) The overall American military strategy in the Pacific at this point was one of "improvised defense" due to the general lack of resources in the Pacific after Pearl Harbor. (7:274) The more specific military strategy of learning the enemy plans for Midway, then concentrating all available forces on this one area was highly effective against the dissipated Japanese forces. (7:273) Midway represented the strategic turning point in the war, leading to a new strategy of limited offensives until the U.S. industrial base became fully responsive. (7:274)

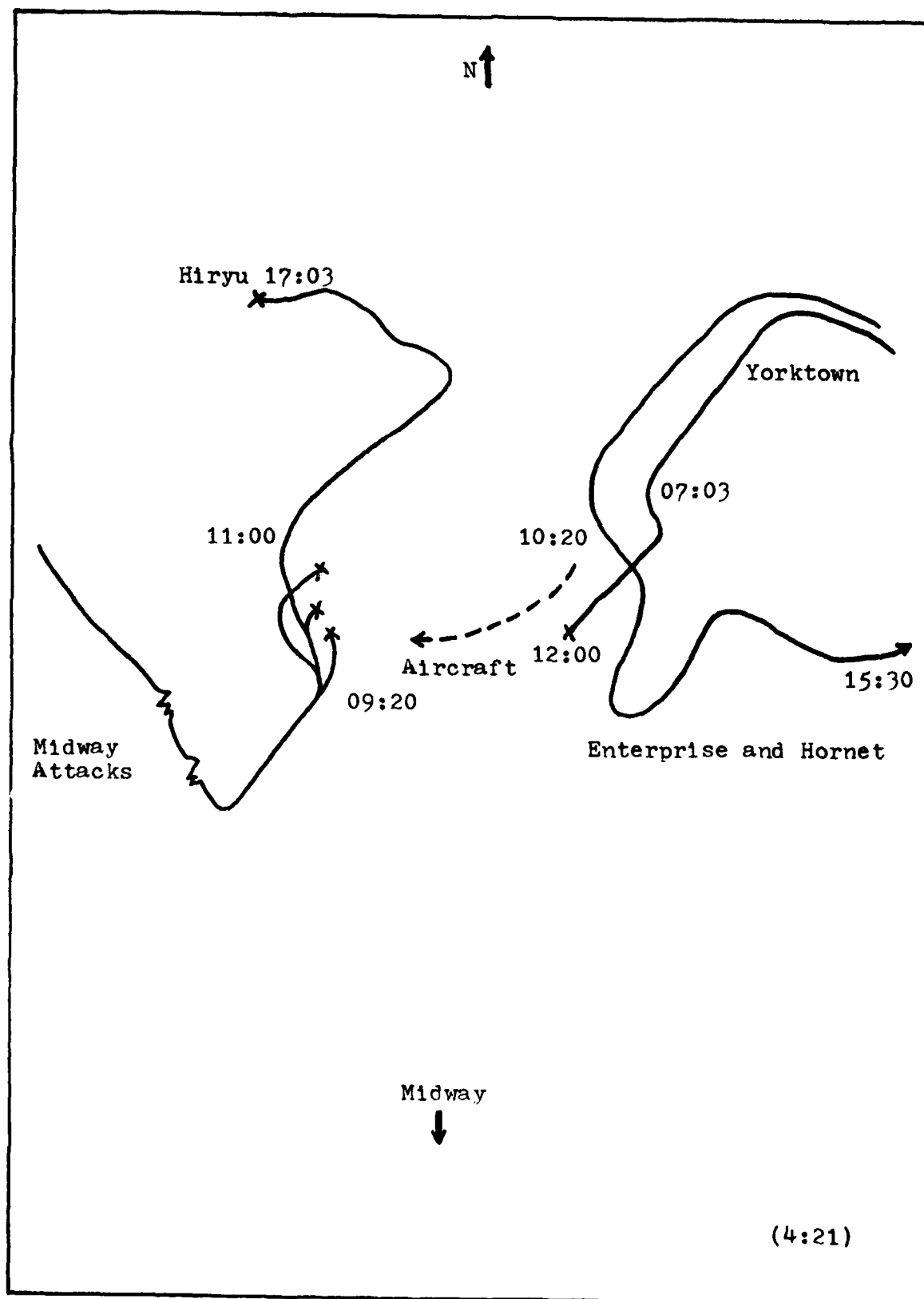
Admiral Spruance had studied and thought about conduct of naval battles while assigned to the Naval War College as a student and faculty member. (7:257) He was known for his ability as a thinker. Spruance displayed Nelsonian traits in his aggressive nature in battle and his ability to consistently make correct critical decisions such as those made at Midway. (7:257) On the other hand, he was also cautious enough to avoid being lured into unfavorable situations as shown by his actions in pursuit of the Japanese as they withdrew from Midway. Tactically, he took advantage of every opening, had a superb sense of timing, yet never exposed his forces to unrealistic danger.

The Battle of Midway positively reflects proper consideration of many of the principles of war. The objective was

clearly stated by both Nimitz and Spruance. The combined use of surprise in an offensive tactic with proper attention to critical timing resulted in defeat of a superior force. On the other hand, the Japanese also lost security when their plan was figured out by U.S. intelligence officers. Both forces attempted to use maneuver to their advantage, however the U.S. was more successful at being at the right place at the right time, and also by failing to be lured into disadvantageous positions. Most important, the U.S. used effective mass to concentrate forces to defeat the Japanese. The enemy was unable to maintain a cohesive force and by dispersing their forces failed to insure victory at Midway, violating the principle of economy of force. Unity of command was retained by both forces. The simplicity of the U.S. plan was decisive, when compared to the complex Japanese battle plans. The proper application of the principles of war can be found in the successful accomplishment of the U.S. strategy and tactics at Midway. The Battle of Midway presents an effective consideration of national objectives, grand strategy and the linkage to military and battlefield strategies inherent in the strategy process.

TABLE OF KEY EVENTS - SPRUANCE

| | |
|----------------|---|
| July 1886 | Raymond Ames Spruance born, Baltimore Md. |
| July 1903 | Sworn as Midshipman |
| September 1906 | Graduated from Naval Academy |
| December 1907 | Cruise of Great White Fleet |
| September 1908 | Promoted to Ensign |
| September 1913 | Promoted to Lieutenant (J.G.) |
| March 1913 | First Command, USS Bainbridge |
| October 1913 | Promoted to Lieutenant |
| December 1914 | Married |
| August 1917 | Promoted to Lieutenant Commander |
| September 1918 | Promoted to Commander |
| July 1932 | Promoted to Captain |
| December 1940 | Promoted to Rear Admiral |
| September 1941 | Commander, Cruiser Div 5 |
| June 1942 | Battle of Midway |
| June 1943 | Promoted to Vice Admiral |
| August 1943 | Commander Central Pacific Force |
| February 1944 | Promoted to Admiral |
| March 1946 | President Naval War College |
| July 1948 | Retires |
| February 1952 | Ambassador to Philippines |
| December 1969 | Spruance Dies (l:xvii-xviii) |



CHAPTER THREE

WILLIAM FREDERICK HALSEY AND THE BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Frederick Halsey Jr. was born on 30 Oct 1882, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. (2:2) His mother was the former Anne Masters Brewster. (2:3) He came from a family of seamen including his father, who graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1873 and later retired from the Navy as a Captain. (5:6) He had virtually always intended to pursue a naval career. (2:4) After securing a Presidential appointment to the Naval Academy, he was sworn in on 7 July, 1900 and subsequently graduated with the class of 1904. (2:4) Halsey was athletically inclined and did well as a fullback on the Academy varsity squad. (5:7) Academically, he ranked 43rd of 62 graduates that year. (2:8)

Halsey's first assignment was to sea duty on the battleship Missouri. An interesting coincidence in his career was that his last seagoing duty, forty years later, was on a different and highly sophisticated battleship of the same name. (2:9) He was later assigned to the USS Kansas and participated in President Roosevelt's Great White Fleet around the world cruise. (5:7) Halsey was married to Francis Cooke Grandy at Norfolk Virginia in 1909. (5:7) During World War One, he saw duty on destroyers

stationed in the North Sea area, commanding the Benham and later the Shaw. (5:7) He was awarded the Navy Cross for his efforts as commander of these two vessels. (2:37)

Halsey was later assigned to the Naval Academy and became involved in the first permanent aviation detail, changing his whole career and starting a lifelong fascination with flying. (5:10) His first aircraft carrier command was the Saratoga and by 1944 he had been promoted to full Admiral and had had a long history of successes as a carrier commander. (5:11)

THE PHILIPPINES

The flow of the U.S. Pacific offensive had by 1944 converged on the Philippine Islands. (8:7) They were seen by Halsey as a point from which to jump, via Iwo Jima and Okinawa, to the home islands of Japan. (3:255) Many Japanese war materials and supplies came from Malaya and the East Indies, and from the Philippines the Americans could effectively cut their southern supply lines. (3:256) The Philippines were the next great objective in the U.S. Pacific effort and were also the object for which some observers thought the Japanese would risk an all out naval engagement. (8:8) The enemy navy had not deployed for a major engagement, with one exception, since the early days of the war. (8:8) The U.S. lines of supply and communication were stretched to the maximum while the Japanese were not nearly so tasked, plus the Japanese had access to land based air power and

many airfields in the Philippines from which to support a major sea engagement. (8:8-9) Therefore the Philippines had strategic significance to both sides. Leyte was an important island and was the focal point for U.S. invasion plans in the Philippines.

LEYTE GULF

The Battle for Leyte Gulf was very complex. It was the greatest naval battle of World War Two, and in terms of numbers and power of ships and aircraft, was the greatest sea battle of all time. (3:256) The battle consisted of four separate but interrelated engagements, each of which was comparable to any other battle fought in the Pacific. (8:1) The four battles were fought within approximately 36 hours, from dawn one day until dusk of the next, and were conducted in three different bodies of water, as far as 500 miles apart. (8:1) The separate engagements all had the objective of defeating a single massive Japanese force, organized into three smaller forces or fleets. (8:1) The Japanese were attempting to defeat American forces and exclude them from recently established beachheads by attacking from three different directions. (8:1) As was typical of the Japanese naval tactics in World War Two, their plan was bold and complicated, involving diversions and the possible sacrifice of their fleet carrier force. The suicidal Kamikaze campaign was initiated and added to the original battle plan for this engagement. (8:1-2) Forces involved in this battle consisted of carriers and

associated aircraft, surface and subsurface combatants, and land based aircraft. (8:2) The primary focus of this chapter will be on engagements involving carrier air power and Halsey's Third Fleet.

The first major battle opened in the Sibuyan Sea with strikes by U.S. carrier based aircraft against the largest Japanese surface combatant force. (8:2) The enemy replied with land and carrier based airstrikes. (8:2) The second phase was a surface night battle fought in the Surigao Strait. (8:2) There was no action involving aircraft in this battle, however this battle included the largest torpedo attack of the war and also had a massive heavy gunnery exchange. (8:2) The third phase of the Battle for Leyte Gulf was fought off Cape Engaño, to the north, and was a one sided carrier aircraft action fought against a combined Japanese carrier and battleship force. (8:2) The fourth action was fought at about the same time as the third phase. It was conducted off Samar Island, between unlikely forces consisting of heavy enemy surface ships versus American light escort carriers as primary combatants. (8:2) For the purposes of comparison, the major U.S. forces in The Battle of Midway consisted of three carriers and no battleships. Leyte Gulf major forces included eight fleet carriers, eight light carriers and sixteen escort carriers plus twelve battleships. (8:4)

Due to previous losses of carriers and aircraft, the Japanese prepared for a surface action as their main objective. Their remaining carriers were seen as expendable in this battle,

because there seemed to be no sense in saving the carrier fleet at the expense of the loss of the Philippines. (8:18-21) An all out effort was necessary due to the critical supply line situation, most notably threatening fuel for the war effort. Therefore, although surface action was their primary objective, the Japanese did commit their remaining carrier forces consisting of one large and three smaller carriers. (8:14) "The Philippines were vital to the continuation of the war" said Japanese Second Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Kurita. (8:21)

U.S. strategy in the area was affected by Halsey. While attempting to neutralize airfields on islands near the Philippines, Halsey found them poorly defended. He saw this as a sign of weakness in the area and recommended that the main assault on the Philippines be accelerated. (8:9) His plan was accepted and immediately instated, accelerating the Philippines action by two months. (8:10) This acceleration complicated invasion plans, taxing U.S. planning and supply lines to the maximum. (8:10)

COMMAND AND CONTROL

The Japanese force consisted of three fleets, each under independent command. (8:23) Additionally, one fleet was divided into parts, each operating in widely separated areas. (8:23) A fourth force consisting of land based planes was a separate command, adding to a difficult and complex structure. (8:23) Further, the only common superior these forces had was in Tokyo.

(8:23) This ultimately resulted in a lack of naval coordination, plus problems in coordination with the army land based planes.

(8:24)

The American command situation was also complicated. Two huge fleets, among other forces, would be working together in a major engagement involving land, air, surface and subsurface forces. The Third Fleet under Halsey reported to Admiral Nimitz at Pearl Harbor, while the Seventh Fleet under Vice Admiral Kinkaid reported to General MacArthur in the Philippine area.

(8:25) Thus, the two fleets "had no common superior short of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington". (8:25) This division of responsibilities increased the amount of coordination and communication required, increasing the opportunity for misinterpretation of orders and creating a setting for other possible misunderstandings. (8:25) As the requirement for communication increased, so did the opportunity for lost or confusing instructions. This, coupled with having to deal with not one but three enemy forces further complicated the communication and coordination process.

PRELUDE TO BATTLE

The Seventh Fleet consisted of 738 vessels, 157 of which were combatants. (8:26) These were mostly heavy bombardment, firesupport and escort carriers plus amphibious forces. (8:26) The Third Fleet was organized into four task forces, three of

which were positioned NW to SE on the east side of the Philippines. The fourth group was involved in resupply operations further to the east. (8:47) The Third Fleet included Task Force 38, said to be a "greater firepower than had ever been assembled on the high seas under one command". (8:26) This fleet had eight fleet carriers, eight light carriers and six fast battleships among other vessels. (8:26) Halsey's flagship was the battleship New Jersey. (8:26)

The Japanese Navy was hardly a match for the combined Third and Seventh fleets, without taking advantage of land based air power and favorable geographic characteristics available to them in the area. (8:27) By concentrating their forces against a divided command in a surprise attack, they saw an opportunity for success. (8:27)

Admiral Halsey was responsible to coordinate his operation with Admiral Kinkaid, because Third Fleet was in support of Seventh Fleet and its planned invasion, the primary objective. (8:28) He was to "cover and support forces (of the Seventh Fleet) in order to assist in the seizure and occupation of objectives in the central Philippines", to "destroy enemy naval and air forces in or threatening the Philippine area" and to "protect air and sea communications along the central Pacific axis", however "in case opportunity for destruction of (a) major portion of the enemy fleet offer or can be created, such destruction becomes the primary task". (8:28)

Halsey was known as an aggressive individual. When he

assumed command of Third Fleet in Aug 1944, he had not had a carrier command for two and a half years, since before Midway. (8:29) His carrier experiences were from smaller size raids fought when the U.S. Pacific strategy was primarily defensive or opportunistically offensive. He felt restricted by having to cover the Seventh Fleet forces and had indicated a desire to operate in the South China Sea, hoping to destroy the enemy carrier air forces. (8:30)

THE BATTLES

On 20 October 1944, the bombardment of the beaches of northern Leyte started in preparation for the main landings to follow. (8:31) Third Fleet carrier activity during this initial period was involved with suppressing land based aircraft. (8:37) The Japanese were enroute in three separate forces to be used in the north, central, and southern or invasion areas. The Japanese fleet reaction to the U.S. invasion was not observed until 22 October, when initial contact with their inbound forces was made by U.S. submarines, which sank two heavy cruisers and damaged a third in a highly successful engagement. (8:37)

THE BATTLE OF THE SIBUYAN SEA

The first search aircraft contact with the largest Japanese force came on the morning of the 24th. (8:50) This was

the enemy Center Force approaching from the west, which the Third Fleet surface force could not immediately engage because no enemy carriers had yet been sighted, the inter-island channels were mined restricting progress, and land based airpower also posed a threat. (8:50) Because of the size and heavy gunpower of the Center Force, Halsey knew that it was a threat to the invasion and that he must attack with his carrier aircraft. (8:50) This engagement became known as the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea. Halsey concentrated his three available task groups and diverted the fourth to a closer resupply point in preparation for battle. (8:50) Shortly thereafter, the Japanese Southern Force was sighted heading for Leyte and the Seventh Fleet. By concentrating his forces against the more powerful Center Force, Halsey took his southern task group out of striking range of the enemy Southern Force, leaving them to be engaged by the Seventh Fleet. (8:52-53) This decision did not appear to be unreasonable, as the Center Force was assumed to be the bigger threat. (8:53) Third Fleet started launching airstrikes at 0910 on the 24th of October. The enemy also launched an initial three airstrikes from land bases, with one raid having as many as 60 aircraft in it. (8:54) These attacks were highly unsuccessful for the enemy while U.S. pilots did very well in combat, one pilot scoring nine kills in one mission. (8:56) During later raids, the light carrier Princeton was hit and eventually sunk, a major blow struck by the enemy, who had taken serious aircraft losses in earlier raids. (8:59) After extensive air to air engagements, the Center Force surface

combatants were attacked by U.S. carrier aircraft. Due to Japanese land based aircraft being used against U.S. naval forces, the Center Force was without air cover. (8:59) Halfway through the day's air effort, pilots reported serious damage inflicted to several enemy ships but nothing sunk, while the enemy pressed through the Sibuyan Sea toward San Bernadino Straits and Leyte. (8:63) The Japanese carriers had still not been located and were cause for concern to Halsey. (8:64) Search efforts had to be postponed due to continuing Japanese attacks. By day's end, 167 Japanese planes had been shot down or otherwise destroyed with minimal losses to U.S. aircraft forces. (8:70)

Late in the afternoon of the 24th the Japanese Northern Force was sighted and the enemy carriers were located. (8:71) The overall composition of the Northern Force was badly overestimated in terms of heavy gunpower, influencing important decisions about to be made. (8:73) No time was left for an airstrike on the Northern Force due to nightfall, so Halsey formulated a plan diverting his Third Fleet forces away from the enemy Center Force and toward the Northern Force and the enemy carriers. (8:74).

Halsey felt that the Center Force had been badly damaged during the day's airstrikes. He made this determination based on poor and incomplete reports made by pilots returning from missions of the day. (8:79) He also felt that the overestimated Northern Force presented more of a danger to the Leyte operation because they were fresh, had aircraft carriers and had not been engaged at

all. (8:79) Halsey knew that abandoning the Center Force to attack the Northern Force was risky, however he assumed the Center Force to be less of a threat, and that he could return to reengage them, should their capabilities have been underestimated. (8:79) He studied three alternatives in making his decision:

- "a) Divide the forces leaving Task Force 34 to block San Bernadino Straits while the carriers with light screens attacked the Northern Force;
- b) Maintain integrity of our own striking strength, concentrating on San Bernadino Straits;
- c) Strike the Northern Force with all of our striking strength concentrated, and leave San Bernadino Straits unguarded." (8:80)

The strategic decision by Halsey can be best summarized by his own report:

"(c) was adopted; it maintained the integrity of the Blue (U.S.) striking fleet; it offered (the) best possibility of surprise and destruction of (the) enemy carrier force. It was particularly sound and necessary if the strength of the Northern Force proved to be the maximum reported. It was recognized that the Center Force might sortie and inflict some damage, but its fighting power was considered too seriously impaired to win a decision. Finally, it was calculated that the Third Fleet forces could return in time to reverse any advantage that the Center Force might gain, and Commander Third Fleet was firmly convinced that (c) would contribute most to the overall Philippines campaign even if a temporarily tight situation existed at Leyte." (8:80)

The entire Third Fleet consisting of more than 90 warships was therefore dedicated to the attack of the Northern Force, in reality consisting of only 19 ships, while the tactically

important San Bernadino Straits were left entirely uncovered.

(8:81)

Halsey informed Seventh Fleet that he was going north with three groups to strike the enemy carrier force at daybreak. He also told them the position of the Center Force and indicated that it was in poor condition. (8:81) Shortly thereafter, the Center Force was again sighted and was rapidly advancing toward San Bernadino Straits. Halsey assumed that this was only an undamaged portion of the main force and that the Center Force could not have recovered this quickly from the assumed earlier damages. (8:82)

Additional sightings confirmed that the Center Force with battleships, was still moving toward San Bernadino Straits. (8:82) Halsey brushed aside this information, preferring to believe that this force was on a "do or die" mission and was not a major threat. (8:84) He therefore did not alter his strategy, nor was vital information of the Center Force advance ever passed to Admiral Kinkaid and Seventh Fleet. (8:84) The reality of the situation was that the enemy Center Force had lost only one ship to our air attacks, a major battleship. (8:85) One other ship was damaged enough to force departure from the area, however all other ships hit during the airstrikes were able to proceed without significantly reduced fighting capabilities. (8:85)

Seventh Fleet had been preparing for a night battle against the Southern Force and Admiral Kinkaid assumed that Third Fleet was still in position to stop the Center Force. (8:89) This assumption was based on interpretations of Halsey's messages

to his fleet and to Seventh Fleet. Kinkaid did not understand that San Bernadino Straits was abandoned and that the Center Force was pressing ahead. Therefore Seventh Fleet was preparing to battle the inferior single Southern Force rather than two forces, that when combined represented a superior threat coming from different directions. As a result, Seventh Fleet concentrated its heavy gunnery forces in the Surigao Strait, leaving the escort carriers and screening ships to the east of Leyte. (8:85-91)

THE BATTLE OF SURIGAO STRAIT

The Japanese Southern Force consisted of one group plus a group previously detached from the Center Force. These units had never before fought together, creating a situation for poor coordination and command and control difficulties. (8:93-94) The Battle of Surigao Strait was a heavy gunnery dominated engagement, a night battle which inflicted tremendous damage on the Japanese Southern Force. Two battleships and three destroyers were sunk during the battle, with others damaged and sunk later. No American vessels were lost. (8:127) However, the Center Force had advanced through the San Bernadino Straits and was entering Leyte Gulf with most of Seventh Fleet low on fuel and ammunition after a difficult and exhausting night battle. (8:128)

THE BATTLE OFF CAPE ENGAÑO

Returning to the Northern area, the Battle off Cape Engaño was beginning to take shape. The enemy carrier commander had expected the complete loss of his fleet at some point during the Battle for Leyte Gulf. (8:129) His mission was to act as a decoy and he tried to "attack as many U.S. carriers as possible and to be the target for (the American) attack." (8:129) This would provide the necessary diversion for the Center and Southern Forces to effectively attack the Seventh Fleet landing force, but would result in the sacrifice of the remaining enemy carrier force. The Japanese carrier force was weak and unable to be rebuilt from previous action, so they gave up 150 combat aircraft for use from land bases. (8:131) Also, their remaining pilots were young and inexperienced. (8:131) Therefore the enemy entered the battle with very little punch, compared to what they would have had at full strength. However, the U.S. did not know that they were less than fully maintained and equipped. The enemy force consisted of one fleet carrier, three light carriers and two converted battleship-carriers, plus thirteen other surface combatants. (8:131)

Admiral Halsey's tactical plan was to form a task force of fast battleships, cruisers and destroyers and advance them ahead of the carriers, then launch his air strikes from behind this screen. (8:135) The idea was to hit the enemy with potent airstrikes at first, then follow up with the heavy gunnery if

necessary. (8:135) The advance screen also provided a measure of antiaircraft protection for Third Fleet carriers.

Night search planes were utilized to locate the Northern Force and once located, Halsey approved formation of his attack force. (8:136) He also reported his actions to Seventh Fleet, which still believed at least part of Halsey's forces were guarding San Bernadino Straits. (8:138)

Contact with the Japanese Northern Force had been lost, but the carriers began launching aircraft at daybreak, assuming that the enemy would be located shortly. (8:138) The Northern Force was finally located and the 180 aircraft in the strike group were vectored in. (8:139) At this point, it was confusing to Halsey that the anticipated large enemy carrier aircraft force was not visible on deck or in the air. Not knowing their true strength, he attributed this to "tactical surprise", catching the enemy unprepared. (8:139) A small Japanese interceptor force rose to meet the U.S. aircraft, but they were quickly dispatched, leaving virtually no air cover for the rest of the day. (8:140)

Heavy damages were then inflicted on the enemy force. During the first airstrike activity, Halsey received the first of many messages from Seventh Fleet, indicating that they had been engaged in Leyte Gulf and that Halsey's battleships were urgently needed. (8:142) This was the Japanese Center Force arriving at Leyte and their subsequent surprise encounter with the Seventh Fleet escort carriers. At this point, Halsey's forces were 350 miles from Leyte and in no position to provide immediate help.

Even after repeated calls for help, Halsey pressed northward, continuing to strike the Northern Force. He did direct his 4th task group, still resupplying, toward Seventh Fleet but they were not close enough to be of any immediate help. (8:143-4)

Nine messages in all requested aid for the Seventh Fleet, complicated by transmission times of 1 to 2 hours before receipt. (8:144) It soon became obvious that the Seventh Fleet was being attacked by the Center Force, after the Center Force had been "mauled" by six airstrikes the previous day. (8:145) It was not until three hours after the first appeal for help that Halsey about faced his battleships and some of his carriers to go the aid of Seventh Fleet. (8:147) Even this was not accomplished quickly because the new group had to get formed up, recover aircraft and refuel. (8:149) Meanwhile the remaining carrier forces continued to strike the Northern Force, eventually sinking all four enemy carriers. (8:155)

The Battle off Cape Engaño was a decisive victory for the U.S. but was not without problems:

"Radar search, air reconnaissance, and radio communications have not eliminated from naval warfare two of its oldest characteristics, confusion and misapprehension. Both were present on each side of the Battle off Cape Engano. Our overestimation of the enemy force, both its gun power and air power, is matched by the enemy's underestimation of our strength." (8:162)

The Japanese decoy plan was highly successful in diverting the Third Fleet but was not as effective as hoped, because word of

its success did not reach other Japanese Forces engaged in the southern area. (7:162) Had this occurred, the Battle for Leyte Gulf may have had a different conclusion.

THE BATTLE OFF SAMAR

The Battle off Samar had started in the early morning hours of the 25th of October. It involved American escort carriers and their screening vessels against the heavy surface combatants of the enemy Center Force. The first indication of an enemy presence came as lookouts sighted antiaircraft bursts from surface vessels, and within minutes a visual report of Japanese "pagoda" type masts appearing above the horizon. (8:165) Planes were launched quickly, with whatever they happened to be armed with, in an attempt to immediately engage the enemy. (8:165) The enemy started firing heavy guns during this period and the battle was on. The slower American escort carriers, never intended to engage surface forces at close range, were in serious trouble. The bulk of the rest of Seventh Fleet was not near enough to provide aid to this northern group of carriers, and Admiral Kinkaid began requesting Halsey's help as soon as the enemy was discovered. (8:171) It soon became painfully obvious that Halsey was not where Kinkaid thought he was and that Seventh Fleet itself was in danger. Had it not been for heroic torpedo and gun attacks by available destroyers, and effective use of smoke and other screening ploys, the Samar engagement would have been a disaster.

(8:165-180) As it was, two escort carriers were lost, along with two destroyers and a destroyer escort. (8:176) Ten additional ships received significant damage. The enemy lost three heavy cruisers outright, and had other ships damaged. (8:183)

Ineffective Japanese gunnery, plus the highly effective destroyer defense and carrier based aircraft attacks eventually led to the Japanese abandonment of this engagement, however they still fully intended to continue on to Leyte. (8:195) They appeared to quit fighting at the point where their victory at Samar was almost assured, however Leyte was their primary concern. (8:194) The Japanese regrouped for approximately two hours, then within two hours of their objective they surprisingly turned north and retired from the southern battle area altogether. (8:200) The Japanese had lost a major portion of two of three fleets, but still had a powerful force remaining when they elected to withdraw. Many reasons have been offered for this withdrawal: they had a fear of continued land and sea based air attacks and had no idea where Third Fleet was; they had assumed that the Leyte landing had already taken place and that they therefore could not stop it; there was a desire to attack Third Fleet; lack of coordination within Japanese forces and with command authority also contributed. (8:200-205)

Halsey's reversal in order to return south was too late to provide any immediate assistance to Seventh Fleet or influence the Samar action. (8:199)

"The fast battleships of the Third Fleet therefore spent the 24 most critical hours of the 3 day battle steaming 300 miles up the coast of Luzon and 300 miles back between the enemy forces without firing a shot at either."
(8:220)

The Kamikaze suicide tactics were first introduced by the now desperate Japanese during the Samar battle. They were effective, inflicting serious damage to four escort carriers and resulted in the sinking of a fifth. (8:206) This was at the expense of at least 52 aircraft and men. (8:228)

VICTORY AT LEYTE GULF

The rest of the Samar engagement was primarily a clean up action, resulting in pursuit of the Japanese Fleet, striking at their heavy ships at opportune times and inflicting significant damage from both air and surface attacks. In all, 26 enemy combatant vessels were sunk in the group of battles known as the Battle For Leyte Gulf. The American losses amounted to only 6 combatants sunk. (8:229) The Battle for Leyte Gulf has been called an "overwhelming victory for the United States Navy" which sank approximately 45% of the Japanese tonnage committed to this action. (8:229-230) "The destruction of the enemy's entire operational carrier forces dramatized conclusively the end to Japanese naval airpower", and the surface forces of their navy became "strictly auxiliary" after this battle. (8:230) For all intents and purposes, the Japanese Navy would cease to be a major factor in World War Two as a result of this action.

The Battle for Leyte Gulf was an American victory in spite of a non-unified command situation. Halsey's ability to make a unilateral decision to depart and pursue another mission would have contributed to a possible downfall, had the Japanese elected to continue on to Leyte from Samar. Had command, control and communication, along with intelligence information been better, it is doubtful that the San Bernadino Straits would have been left unguarded, exposing our naval efforts in the Philippines to near disaster. (8:233) To Halsey's credit, one author poses the interesting question of the outcome of the Battle for Leyte Gulf had "Bull" Halsey been in command of the Japanese force that came within two hours of potential victory and then elected to retire. (8:235) It is not hard to imagine him pressing to decisive victory.

STRATEGY PROCESS MODEL ANALYSIS

The American forces in the Pacific were strongly on the offensive by October, 1944. The national objective of defeat of the Japanese had not changed. As the Japanese empire continued to shrink due to loss of previously acquired territories, the grand strategies involving the economic and military instruments of power were being brought to bear on Japan itself. Leyte Gulf and the Philippines represented a crucial outpost for protection of Japan's economic supply line, most notably supplies of fuel. Without fuel the Japanese war machine would grind to a halt. The

Japanese felt that it was worth the possible sacrifice of their fleet rather than to lose this supply lifeline. (7:301)

The American naval strategy at Leyte Gulf was very aggressive. This was due in part to Halsey's bold, reckless nature and to the orders under which he was operating, which gave him free rein to attack the enemy fleet as he saw fit, if an opportunity for its destruction presented itself. (7:301-302)

The military strategy and tactics employed in the Philippines were originally sound, given the massive superior power of U.S. forces and Japanese deficiencies in their forces. Halsey's departure to engage the enemy carrier forces to the north could have been very effective, had he known their true firepower. He possibly could have defended San Bernadino Straits and also engaged the Northern Force by splitting his fleet, without endangering Seventh Fleet activities, had he had better intelligence. (7:304) The Battle for Leyte Gulf was a victory of superior firepower, luck and an ineffective enemy force. Questionable tactics used by Halsey almost turned certain victory into defeat.

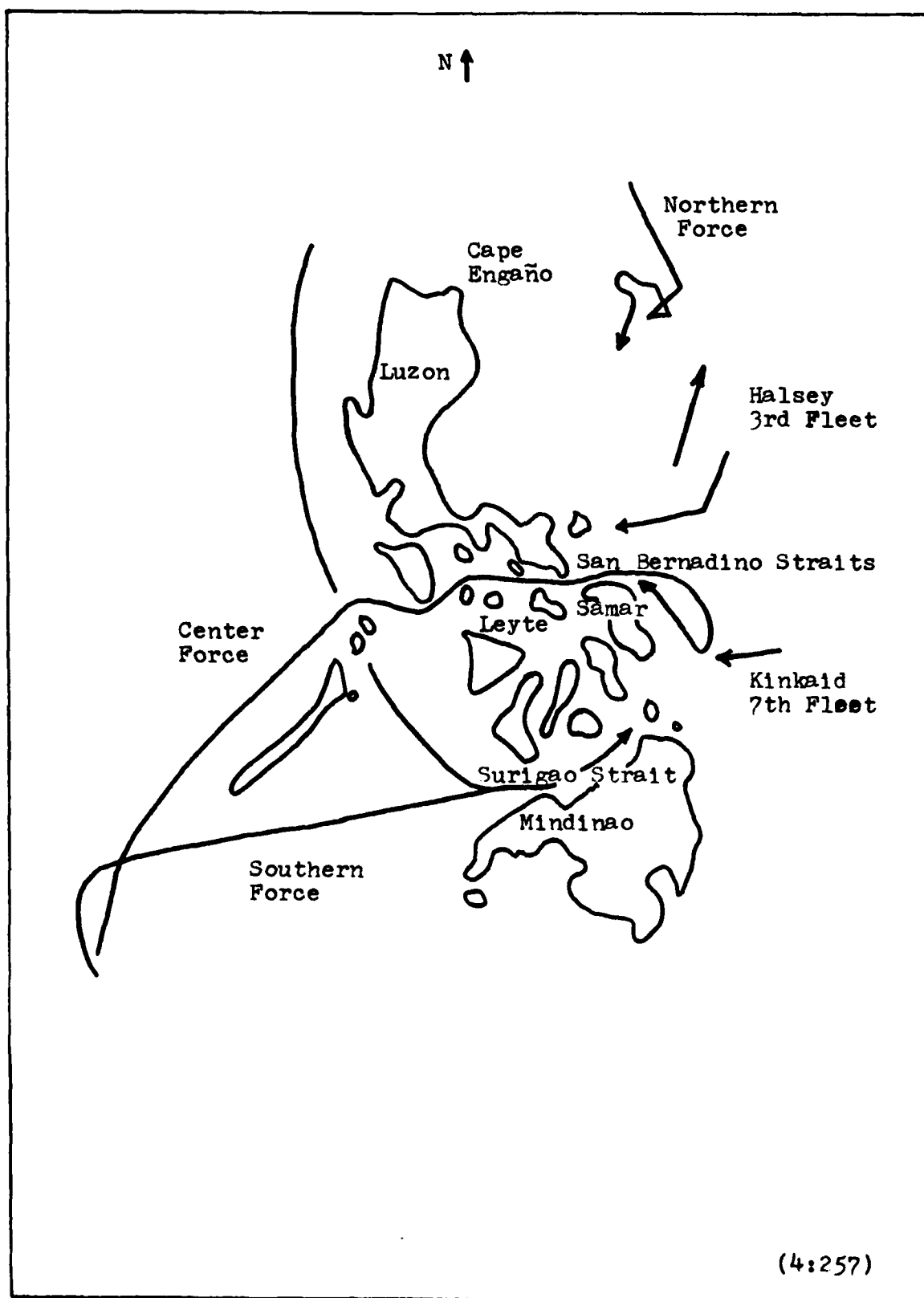
Examples of the principles of war can be found in the conduct of the Battle for Leyte Gulf. The objective of gaining control of the Philippines for economic and military reasons was well known by both sides and U.S. forces were massed for offensive action. Unity of command was lacking on both sides. For U.S. forces there was no common superior short of Washington D.C., and poor coordination of the military instruments of power (Seventh

and Third Fleets) during the battle almost cost the U.S. a major defeat. This problem can be traced to the dual command situation existing between MacArthur and Nimitz in the Pacific. The Japanese situation was similar. Halsey failed to secure the San Bernadino Straits creating an unfortunate surprise attack situation on Seventh Fleet as the enemy Center Force arrived unannounced in the Leyte area. Had Halsey had better information, he possibly could have stopped both the Center Force and the Northern Force through maneuver and economy of force. The attack plans utilized by the Japanese were not simple and required effective timing and coordination, something that was lacking on both sides. By splitting their forces and committing an unprepared carrier force to battle the enemy failed to maintain cohesion. The Battle for Leyte Gulf was a major U.S. victory, but was unnecessarily jeopardized by poor communications and a lack of coordination between Third and Seventh Fleets. More effective application of the principles of war would have contributed to an easier victory.

The Battle for Leyte Gulf as viewed through the strategy process model suffered from a breakdown between the military strategy step and the employment phase because of the lack of unity of command between the two forces and Halsey's alteration of the original battle plan. The American force strength was sufficient to offset these problems in this decisive victory.

TABLE OF KEY EVENTS - HALSEY

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| October 1882 | Born, Elizabeth, New Jersey |
| July 1900 | Sworn as Midshipman |
| February 1904 | Graduated from Naval Academy |
| February 1906 | Promoted to Ensign |
| December 1907 | Cruise of Great White Fleet |
| December 1909 | Married |
| August 1912 | First Command, USS Flusser |
| February 1918 | Promoted to Commander |
| February 1927 | Promoted to Captain |
| March 1938 | Promoted to Rear Admiral |
| Spring 1940 | Promoted to Vice Admiral |
| November 1942 | Promoted to Admiral |
| October 1944 | Battle for Leyte Gulf |
| September 1945 | Japanese Surrender on USS Missouri |
| December 1945 | Promoted to Fleet Admiral |
| March 1947 | Retired |
| August 1959 | Halsey Dies |



CHAPTER FOUR

A COMPARISON OF THE MILITARY STRATEGIES OF SPRUANCE AND HALSEY

SPRUANCE

Admiral Spruance was a deliberate tactical thinker who was well prepared for naval battle through his extensive studies while associated with the Naval War College. At the Battle of Midway, he seized every opportunity he had to strike the enemy on terms favorable to his forces. Concentration of forces provided decisive victory, anything less could have resulted in disaster. As in any battle of major proportions, a certain amount of luck was a factor at Midway. But luck alone is not enough to win consistently. Spruance's timely decisions on launch of aircraft, when to retreat from a possible engagement and when to press pursuit of the enemy were the keys to victory at Midway. Spruance acted with advice from his staff, with available intelligence and with confidence in his forces. The fact that he acted with conviction when necessary, and with caution when the situation dictated, are admirable traits of any leader.

HALSEY

Admiral Halsey was a bold aggressive warrior who seemed to believe in direct confrontation of the enemy, even at the expense of a battle plan, as was the case at Leyte Gulf. Aggressiveness, coupled with good intelligence and coordination with other forces can be a big plus in battle. However, unilateral uncoordinated splitting of forces and abandoning of battle plans can result in defeat. It is difficult to criticise Halsey's actions at Leyte Gulf, knowing that attempts at coordination with Seventh Fleet were made and that his orders allowed him to pursue the enemy carrier force. The best course of action would, in retrospect, have appeared to been one of moderation. Complete coordination and better intelligence could have resulted in destruction of the Northern Force and successful defense of the San Bernadino Straits. Raw strength of American forces at Leyte Gulf plus Japanese errors in judgement and strategy contributed to the U.S. victory.

SUMMARY

Spruance and Halsey were indeed great warriors in their own manner of doing things. One must recognize that both Admirals had long careers as combat commanders during World War Two. Studies of Midway and Leyte Gulf only provide insight into how each individual handled one battle involving aircraft carriers as

central players. Strategies were different, as were tactics employed. Size of forces involved were significantly different. Nevertheless, Spruance emerged from World War Two with the reputation as one of the greatest naval thinkers ever, while controversy about Halsey's actions at Leyte Gulf linger on.

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